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No. 47

House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ADERHOLT).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
April 3, 2001.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ROBERT B. ADERHOLT to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2001, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

UNEXPLODED ORDNANCES ARE SERIOUS PROBLEM

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I have just returned from the campus of American University in the exclusive Spring Valley residential community here in Washington, D.C.

From a distance one could not imagine, but it is actually one of over a thousand sites around the country where war is being continued; 26 years after the Vietnam War, 56 years after the conclusion of World War II, 83 years after World War I, there is still a

battle taking place right here on American soil. It involves mines, nerve gases, and toxics and explosive shells. It has claimed at least 65 lives, and has maimed and injured many more. Sadly, it continues every day, and if we are not careful, it will continue for another thousand years.

Toxic explosive waste of our military activities in the United States, unexploded ordnances on formerly used defense installations probably contaminates 20 to 25 million acres in the United States, and the number could be as high as 50 million acres. Sadly, no one can give us an accurate appraisal of the problem. What we do know is at the current rate of spending, it will take centuries, maybe even a thousand years or more, to return this land to safe and productive use. Some may be so damaged, we may not attempt to clean it up.

Unexploded ordnances are a serious problem today. Human activity and wildlife are encroaching on more and more of these sites as our neighborhoods grow and sprawl. At the same time, the natural rhythms of nature, flooding, earthquakes, and landslides, aided and abetted by human activity, exposes these dangers. Today, across America, we are finding lost and forgotten unexploded ordnance that was intentionally buried in a feeble attempt to dispose of it, or a shell that missed its mark and did not explode as intended.

There are many targets toward which citizens can direct their frustrations and in some cases anger: the Department of Defense, the Army Corps of Engineers or EPA. People have some legitimate concerns about what these and other agencies have done in the past and what they are doing now. But there is one participant that is missing in action, and that is the United States Congress. Only we in Congress can set adequate funding levels, budget clearly, and then make sure that enough

money is appropriated to do the job right. Congress can pinpoint managerial responsibility and establish the rules of the game.

It is not acceptable to me for Congress to occasionally step in from the sidelines, complain, protest, and then shift inadequate funding from one high-priority project to another high-priority project. This ability to find an unexploded ordnance, decontaminate sites and have the infrastructure is going to be a zero-sum game if we do not properly advance the goal of protection.

Mr. Speaker, Congress needs to report for duty, and needs to provide the administrative and financial tools that are necessary. What I am talking about will not affect active ranges and readiness. That is a separate topic with its own set of issues. My concern is the closed, transferred and transferring ranges where the public is exposed or soon will be.

More than 1,000 years to clean up these sites is not an appropriate timetable when people are at risk every day. In the 1980s, three boys in San Diego were playing in a field next to a subdivision that they lived in, and they found a shell. It exploded and killed two of them. American University campus that I just left has a child care center that is now closed down because of high levels of arsenic contamination because this area during World War I was a test ground for poison and chemical warfare.

Mr. Speaker, we must make sure that whether it is in suburban Washington, D.C., on Martha's Vineyard or in Camp Bonneville in my community that we get the job done, and it is not appropriate to take a millennium or even a century to do it. We need to step up and do the job.

Mr. Speaker, my goal in Congress is to make sure that every Member understands what is going on in their State because there are these toxic

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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